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TORREYA

January, 1902

CONSERVATION OF ENERGY IN MYCO- LOGICAL CLUBS

BY LUCIEN M. UNDERWOOD

When the mycological club idea first swept over the country it was thought by some of the less sanguine that like many other fads the interest would soon die out, but the amount of vitality possessed by some of the clubs shows an increasing instead of a decreasing interest. And in some of the clubs certain of the members have done some most interesting work; not only have they made themselves familiar with numerous species in the field but they have also been led in some cases to make permanent records of the characters of these perishable plants. The amount of energy that is put forward in a summer by any one of these clubs is astounding when considered in the aggregate and if only conserved and turned toward the accomplishment of a single point or a few objective points would soon place us in possession of most valuable information relative to our fungus-flora. One of the most needed works is a descriptive manual small enough to be taken into the field for study and complete enough to contain all the known American species of the plants it attempts to describe and provided with usable keys or synopses that will surely lead rather than mislead the beginner. Of beginners' books we already have a sufficiency. To make possible such a work as suggested will involve time and patient work, but the small army of mycological club members could add very material contributions to such a work and hasten its preparation by following the lead of some suggestions. In order to accomplish this as any other task it will require a deal of patient labor on the part of collectors and a good deal of what has been called "dead work."

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Our present knowledge of the higher flora has been brought to its present condition by the contributions of material from hundreds of individuals all over the country. A knowledge of our mycological flora must be brought about in the same way and none are in better condition to help in this matter than these clubs whose primary object is the study of these interesting plants. In order to direct the effort of these clubs so as not to waste energy I would suggest for the present year concentration of effort on certain definite groups of genera.

I would suggest some such series as *Boletus*, *Boletinus*, *Coprinus*, *Lactarius*, *Russula*, *Hygrophorus*, *Lentinus*, and *Marasmius*. Other generic groups need not be neglected but the principal effort might be directed to the above. They are: (1) Easily recognized genera, and (2) contain for the most part edible species, and (3) in most cases are in crying need of a good descriptive synopsis of species. The form of field notes suggested in the next article will take time and patience but will place us in possession of field data that could be obtained only by field workers.

Could the efforts of the clubs or of isolated individuals all over the country be directed toward these genera for one or two seasons and the results with the carefully preserved material be transmitted to a common center for collation and comparison it would serve as the basis of a fairly complete knowledge of the genera in question, their habits, variation, season, and distribution. Such combined effort would count in a single direction and results now scattered and often wasted would be saved and utilized for the help of others in the future.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, January 1, 1902.

THE FIELD STUDY OF MUSHROOMS

BY F. S. EARLE

In no group of plants is careful study in the field so necessary as with the mushrooms, since their soft fleshy texture makes it impossible to prepare them for the herbarium in any way that will fully retain the characters of the fresh plant. In nearly all other groups of plants material hastily gathered and prepared in the